

NAVY ENHANCES VOLUNTARY EDUCATION FOR SAILORS

By CNET Public Affairs

The Navy is implementing an enhanced voluntary education program which will streamline and expand the opportunity for Sailors to pursue college degrees during their Navy career by building, to the maximum extent possible, on the academic credit Sailors earn for Navy training and on-the-job work experience.

Called the Navy College Program (NCP), the program will serve as the umbrella for the current components of voluntary education, and will add several new features, which will integrate all components into a single system. The program is being introduced in three phases over the next year.

“In the past, young people joined the Navy to get money to go to college after their service,” Chief of Naval Operations ADM Jay L. Johnson said. “Now, young people will join the Navy to go to college while serving their country. This is a powerful notion, and one that will benefit the Sailor, the Navy and the nation. It's going to be a wonderful homerun for the Navy and we're very excited about it.”

“As the Navy College Program is phased in over the coming year, we believe it will help provide focus for our sailors who want to get a college degree on their own time, at their own pace both ashore and while they're deployed,” says Vice Adm. John Craine, Chief of Naval Education and Training.

According to Deputy Director of Naval Training, Dr. Allen Zeman, "The Navy College Program is a systemization of a lot of existing programs. It takes all the pieces of old programs that worked and creates a total education system. The goal is to create an environment designed to accommodate the varying academic needs of Sailors."

New features of the program will be introduced in three phases. During the first phase (1 OCT 99-31 DEC 99), Sailors will notice the following enhancements:

On October 1, Navy Campus offices were renamed Navy College Offices. Sailors can visit academic advisors at the offices for advice on which degree path to choose. Office facilities are being upgraded to meet Navy College Office standards and will be staffed with additional academic advisors.

To expand the availability of information on the Navy College Program and academic advice, a new Navy College Center in Pensacola, Fla, will be established to provide Sailors easy access to information about the Navy College Program. The center, manned by educational counselors, seven days a week, 15 hours a day, is accessible starting October 1, 1999, through e-mail, a 1-800 number, DSN access and through the Navy College Program website.

Also, beginning October 1, every Sailor graduating from Boot Camp, and evaluated "A" schools and "C" schools will be given a summary transcript showing the American Council on Education's (ACE) recommendation for academic credit. Boot Camp graduates receive three college credits towards physical education credit. Currently 89% of Navy initial training and 36 % of follow on training has been evaluated by ACE for recommended credit, with the plan to have 100% of initial training and 76% of follow on training evaluated by October 1, 2000. For those courses that have not been evaluated yet, summary transcripts will still serve as a summarized list of military training courses.

Another unique aspect of the NCP is the rating-specific roadmap. Rating-specific roadmaps outline the ACE recommended college credit for Navy training and rating-

related work experience across a Navy career. This road map will assist Sailors in making informed choices on their selection of a college degree program. Rating roadmaps are available on the NCP website and from local Navy College Offices.

In phase two (JAN 2000-SEP 30 2000) sailors will be able to access, view and download copies of their transcript. Starting in January 2000, Sailors will be able to request a copy of their SMART transcript from their local Navy College Office or the Navy College Center. The Sailor/Marine Corps American Council on Education Registry Transcript (SMART) is a computer-generated transcript, which will automatically record the recommended college credit a Sailor earns for military training and work experience. Sailors can also submit official copies of their SMART to academic institutions of their choice.

“The Navy College Program will be geared toward the reality of life at sea, and we will use the Internet to provide Sailors with on-line access to their college transcript,” explains CNO.

Also during this phase of the program, partnerships with colleges and universities will be established to develop rating specific degree options so that these institutions will accept, to the maximum extent possible, college credit for Navy training and experience. This will enhance the current network of 85 colleges and universities supporting Navy education programs. Additionally, the goal of the partnerships will be to simplify acceptance, enrollment, residency requirements and the acceptance of college credit transferred from other academic institutions.

During phase three (OCT 2000 and beyond), the Navy College Program will evolve into a fully mature program. Navy College Offices will continue to be upgraded,

availability of academic advice will continue to expand, and Sailors will be fully engaged in rating-related degree programs maximizing the credits earned from Navy training and job experience. Re-evaluation of initial skills and continued evaluation follow-on training will be conducted and additional Navy College Learning Centers will be opened to provide Sailors an opportunity to improve job skills and prepare for college.

“The Navy College Program will simplify and enhance opportunities for Sailors to pursue a college degree wherever their Navy career takes them, and it will continually remind them that they’re earning college credit while they continue to serve,” explained Vice Adm. Craine.

The CNO added that personal development begets professional development. "This is a program that’s going to make our Sailors more capable of doing their job," Johnson said.

For more information about the Navy College Program, visit your local Navy College Office, call the Navy College Center at 1-877-253-7122/DSN 922-1828, or visit the website at <http://www.navycollege.navy.mil/>.

The Navy College Program brings together under one "umbrella" 11 voluntary education components. They are:

Credit Recommendations for Navy training/occupational experience. Currently, 89 percent of enlisted initial skills and 36 percent of enlisted follow-on training over 45 hours have been evaluated by the American Council on Education (ACE) for recommended college credit. The plan is to have 100% of enlisted initial skills and 76% of enlisted follow-on training evaluated by 30 September 2000.

Sailor/Marine American Council on Education Registry Transcript (SMART). SMART's mission is to provide an academically accepted document to validate a servicemember's military occupational experience and training along with corresponding ACE credit recommendations. Individuals eligible to get a SMART transcript include all active duty Sailors and Marines (enlisted and officer), reserve component personnel, and Sailors and Marines separating or retiring after 1 October 1999. The transcript includes occupations held, courses completed, college level exams completed, and ACE recommended credit. Plans are for anyone to get a copy of their transcript at their local Navy College Office or from the Navy College Center webpage.

Rating "Roadmap." Rating roadmaps are being developed for every Navy rating, showing ACE recommended credit for Navy training and rating-specific work experience. As the enlisted initial training courses are evaluated, the roadmaps will be updated to indicate appropriate credit recommendations.

Tuition Assistance. One aspect of voluntary education that hasn't changed is the 75 percent (up to \$187.50 per credit hour and \$3,500 per year maximum) the Navy funds for courses needed to complete a degree or certificate.

Navy College Program for Afloat College Education (NCPACE). College at sea- what a concept. And it is free! With this component of the Navy College Program, Sailors can get fully funded instruction in both undergraduate and graduate courses from regionally accredited colleges and universities. All Sailors need to pay for are their books. Courses aboard ship are taught through computer or video teleconferencing as well as traditional classroom instruction. All undergraduate courses are from institutions

with Servicemember's Opportunity College-Navy (SOCNAV) affiliation, so Sailors can transfer credit and complete degrees.

Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES). This activity will continue to provide credit by examination tests and a catalog of schools offering distance learning programs available with tuition assistance.

Academic Advice. The Navy College Office will continue to be the focal point for academic advice for Sailors. Additional counselors are being added to the Navy College Office staffs to provide even greater access to educational advisement. To further augment accessibility to information about voluntary education, the Navy is opening the Navy College Center, which will provide world-wide access through WEB-based e-mail and telephone advice. Additionally, assistance from Educational Services Officers and Navy Career Counselors, as well as partner educational institutions is available to all Sailors throughout their careers.

Navy College Learning Center and Navy College Learning Program. These are the new names for Academic Skills Learning Centers and the afloat component. They not only provide Sailors instruction in English, reading and math to help them complete high school and improve their success in college programs, but also preparation for taking tests for college credit by examination and entrance exams such as the SAT and GRE through the DANTES program. By October 2000 the plan is to have 48 open and 52 open by October 2001. All ships have the Academic Skills Program through the NCPACE Program.

Navy College Offices. New name for what was formerly known as Navy Campus Education Centers. Under the Navy College Program plan, offices will get more

personnel and improved facilities, including workstations, and Internet connectivity.

Navy College Offices form a network of professional education services specialists, technicians and guidance counselors at 59 installations around the world, where Sailors who need to can find out how to complete their high school education, improve basic academic skills, work on a technical or occupational certificate, or earn a college degree.

Navy College Center. Something brand new in Navy voluntary education is the Navy College Center, located aboard Saufley Field. The center was developed to provide Sailors easy access and "one-stop shopping" for information on the Navy College Program and ongoing voluntary education programs. A small group of junior and senior Sailors tried out the Navy College Program web site and found it very helpful and informative. It's an automated counseling center to be open seven days a week, 15 hours a day staffed by 12 academic advisers. Sailors can access the center's web site anytime, anywhere. Sailors will interface with advisers via a toll-free number. They can also e-mail the center with questions and expect a speedy reply. "We're proud of it," says Dr. Jeff Cropsey, Director of the Voluntary Education Department. "It's now going to be so much easier for Sailors anywhere in the world to access our programs."

Partnership with Educational Institutions. Using Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges Navy (SOCNAV) as the vehicle, the Navy will form partnerships with educational institutions to provide degrees which will accept and apply the maximum number of American Council on Education recommended credit for Naval training and experience. New education partnership agreements will ensure greater transferability of credits to support the mobile enlisted force.

The Navy College Program has friends in high places, including the Secretary of the Navy and the Chief of Naval Operations, who has said it is his desire to simplify and enhance the opportunity for every Sailor to earn a college degree during his or her Navy career. The Navy College Program intends to make that happen.

To learn more about the program designed to "educate the Sailor of the 21st century," visit their web site address at <http://www.navycollege.navy.mil/> or call 1-877-253-7122.